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AUTHOR Ghani, Ali Abdul; Hunt, Brian
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ABSTRACT

The formative evaluation of a new Malaysian secondary school language curriculum is described. Reasons for choosing formative over summative evaluation are examined, and implementation of the evaluation to date is detailed. In the first two phases, state education officials were trained in principles and procedures of program evaluation, including all stages from planning through reporting of results. These phases included seminars, site visits, and refinement of the overall evaluation plan. The three subsequent phases of the evaluation are to include: (1) another seminar to define communication channels, introduce more sophisticated analytical and reporting procedures, and begin national level studies; (2) review progress, expand use of formative evaluation throughout the country, and provide consultation in data collection to the states; and (3) preparation of the final report and recommendations. Topics identified by the different states for investigation in the evaluation project are noted. The most common are aspects of classroom management, teaching methodology, and learning. State officers' perceptions of what they have learned about evaluation and about the curriculum's implementation in the project's first two phases are summarized. (MSE)

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ED 367 151

NATIONAL LEVEL FORMATIVE EVALUATION: SOME FIRST STEPS

Ali Abdul Ghani and Brian Hunt

1 History and Background

From the beginning of the academic year in January 1987 a new integrated language curriculum: Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah (KBSM), was introduced into Malaysian secondary schools. This was for all the languages taught in Malaysia at secondary school level: Bahasa Malaysia, English, Chinese, Tamil. The KBSM was to be introduced progressively year by year beginning with Form I in 1988. 1990 sees its introduction into Form III. The introduction of the KBSM curriculum for other subjects is following one year behind.

The KBSM curriculum for English aims to integrate the language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing); the language areas of lexis, phonology and grammar as well as knowledge of other subjects on the timetable and good moral values as indicated by the National Education Philosophy of Malaysia.

The Ministry of Education felt that the introduction of the KBSM curriculum should be monitored in order to gauge its effects on teaching and learning in the classroom. It was felt that teachers and students, as the ultimate users of the new curriculum, would have most to say about its effectiveness.

There are three reasons for this decision.

Firstly, it is hoped to obtain a clear picture of the effects of the new curriculum on classroom teaching and learning.

Secondly, it is hoped that teacher-generated ideas for curriculum development will be more sensitive to learners' needs.

Thirdly, modifications to the syllabus are likely to be longer lasting if they are recommended and carried out from 'bottom up' rather than prescribed from 'top down'.

Having decided, in principle, to monitor the introduction of the new curriculum a choice had to be made between a summative evaluation and a formation evaluation.

Several reasons decided in favour of a formative, rather than a summative, evaluation.

Firstly, as the KBSM curriculum is to be introduced progressively year-by-year beginning with the first year and ending with fifth year of secondary schooling, conducting a summative evaluation exercise at the end of five years would be too late to be of optimum benefit.

Secondly, in addition to being too late, it was felt that a summative evaluation would be less subtle and sensitive for the task of monitoring the KBSM programme; and that the ultimate aim of the formative evaluation exercise should be the creation of a delicate set of evaluation instruments.

Dermot Murphy explicitly deals with this aspect:

'Summative evaluation, most often realized as assessment of learner performance, can produce results open to interpretation as dealing with something fixed: what the results should be. Poor results are due to the learners not achieving the objectives of the course. ***Its focus is limited, and the assessment may not give any clue to what needs adjusting to match learner achievement to curriculum expectation.*** The evaluation does

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not produce enough information and reinforces professional secrecy and entrenchment'. (Our emphasis)

Dermot Murphy 'Evaluation in Language Teaching: Assessment, Accountability and Awareness'. Lancaster Practical Papers in English Language Education. Volume 6. Pergamon Press (1985)

Thirdly, the Ministry is eager to encourage teachers to contribute their ideas to curriculum evaluation and development, and by initiating a 'bottom-up' formative evaluation project it is hoped to engage in valuable and informative dialogues between teachers and the Ministry of Education.

Fourthly, it is felt that by encouraging classroom-based investigations of the curriculum in use by teachers and learners, teachers can develop their own self awareness of their classroom techniques and methodology with a view to professional development in both the long and short terms.

Another important consideration relates to the separate responsibilities of the two divisions of the Ministry whose work relates to schools and curricula. Schools Division has the responsibility, through State Education Offices, for the administration and management of schools, teachers and students. The Curriculum Development Centre has the responsibility for curriculum policy, planning, the introduction of new curricula and related training programmes for Resource Persons. It is important that any programme of monitoring the KBSM does not duplicate the work of other ministerial divisions. Diverse divisions of the ministry are, however, kept informed of English language programmes via periodic meetings of inter-divisional committees. The progress and interim findings of the formative evaluation programme are thus reported regularly.

We hope that the results of a formative evaluation will,

i provide precise & accurate information to relevant divisions of the Ministry about the existing situation of teaching and learning in Malaysian secondary schools.

ii allow refinements to be made to the curriculum in the light of experience.

iii help in the planning of teacher education courses related to the KBSM curriculum.

2 Implementation of the Programme

The former English Language Adviser to Schools Division, Mr. Lionel Thompson, was asked to investigate the possibility of an evaluation project. He prepared a working paper in which he outlined areas for investigation. These included suggested investigation of systemic, environmental and pedagogic factors. An initial approach was made on paper to Mr. Dermot Murphy,lecturer in ELT at St. Mary' College, Twickenham, whose response was enthusiastic.

To initiate the formative evaluation project Dermot Murphy was invited to Malaysia to conduct a one-week introductory training seminar, and to follow up with practical field training lasting a further week.

Forty-four participants consisting of State Education Language Officers, Key Personnel and Resource Personnel from each of the fourteen states; officers from various interested divisions of the Ministry of Education (including Heads of Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese and Tamil), Curriculum Development Centre, Federal Inspectorate, Teacher Education Division, and Examinations Syndicate attended the seminar held in Melaka.

The seminar introduced participants to the principles and purpose of evaluation; information gathering techniques and sampling. A range of evaluation questionnaires and pro-forma were analysed. Participants discussed areas for evaluation, and identified a range of priorities. The areas for investigation suggested by Mr. Thompson were offered as a starting point.

The participants prepared evaluation instruments, presented their ideas to fellow-participants and refined them in group discussion. As an aid to classroom observation techniques a video from 'Teaching and Learning in Focus' was presented, and discussed. A simulation was prepared and carried out so that participants could, in turn, present the notion of formative evaluation to teachers. Finally, participants organized and planned future work areas based on ideas gleaned from the seminar.

During the practical field visits to Kelantan (the state in the extreme north-east of Peninsula Malaysia) and Melaka (the state in the south-west of Peninsula Malaysia), State Education Officers, in consultation with Dermot Murphy and school teachers, agreed on their priorities for investigation.

In Kelantan these were:

a investigate students' generally low motivation, particularly in rural schools, focussing on aspects of their attitudes towards English; knowledge of the English-speaking world; the place of English as an international language; and of proficiency in English as a requirement for employment;

b try out and evaluate teaching techniques to use with slow learners;

c assess teachers' understanding and use of methodology required by, or appropriate to, changes introduced by KBSM (e.g. pair and group work; integration of skills; integration of moral values);

d evaluate locally produced materials;

In Melaka these were:

a investigate motivation (as in Kelantan); examine in particular the lack of success a particular semi-rural school has had with the English Language Reading Programme;

b assess the adequacy of the briefing teachers have been given on KBSM;

c assess teachers' understanding and use of methodology required by or appropriate to changes introduced by KBSM (e.g. pair and group work; integration of skills; integration moral values).

It was proposed at the Melaka seminar that participants would organize their own exploratory investigations and that a future seminar to allow reporting back would be arranged. Accordingly Mr. Dermot Murphy was reinvited to conduct a seminar in Penang in September 1989.

Forty-four participants attended the Penang seminar. Participants were State Language Officers, Supervisors, Key Personnel, Resource Personnel, Inspectors and one teacher. This number included twenty-four officers who had attended the Melaka seminar who were directly involved in formative evaluation work, plus colleagues who had been introduced to the formative evaluation programme following the Melaka seminar.

The aims of the seminar were to

i report on evaluation carried out thus far in the individual States

ii review principles and techniques for evaluation

iii focus on the stages of analysis, interpretation and reporting of evaluation findings

iv plan for the third stage of the project.

Participants reported back on their work to date and explained how their investigative instruments had been designed. Many participants felt that they had taken on too much work.

Practical work on analysis and reporting was carried out from participants' work. Dermot Murphy reviewed a range of data gathering techniques: interviewing, observation, diary studies and case-study, to allow participants opportunities to 'triangulate' from their existing data.

By the end of the seminar participants were able to focus their future work. Suggested areas were

i teacher attitude to KBSM

ii teaching techniques in KBSM classes

iii pupil behaviour in KBSR (primary) and KBSM (secondary) classes.

3 The Formative Evaluation Project in Operation

There are several strands of personnel in our formative evaluation project at the Ministry of Education in Malaysia. These are:

Personnel	Roles
Mr Dermot Murphy St. Mary's College Twickenham	act as consultant to the programme provide academic input and practical training (through seminars).
Ministry of Education Officers	manage overall project provide support and guidance keep states up-to-date and in touch with each other.
State Language Officers from all 14 states Key Personnel and Resource Persons from all states	) design evaluation instruments) collect data.
Teachers in various schools Students in various schools	) provide data and feedback from personal experience.

From the inception of his association with our formative evaluation project Mr. Dermot Murphy has had three main tasks.

Firstly he was to provide information about formative evaluation to officers involved in the project. Secondly to give training in preparing evaluation instruments, data collection, data interpretation and reporting. He did all this and more during our first two seminars and will continue with this work during our forthcoming seminar in July, 1990.

Thirdly he was to make recommendations to the Ministry of Education concerning the development of the project in the longer term. His reports have been most useful and our project continues to benefit greatly from his advice. We are working closely with Mr. Murphy in respect of the stages in the project and in the direction that the project should take.

The task of the Schools Division of the Ministry of Education is to oversee the development of the project from its inception to becoming a part of our educational administrative system.

We also have the responsibility to give support to the teams working on formative evaluation at state level through:

- a quarterly newsletter (to keep states in touch and up-to-date)
- visit to states (to give assistance and advise where needed)
- organizing regular (usually twice a year) meetings with all state language officers (to review progress).

Following Mr. Murphy's recommendations we have divided our formative evaluation project into five phases lasting over some 2 1/2 years from January 1989 until June 1991.

In general, these phases cover the stages of development of the project from the initial introduction to the project in January 1989 until the submission of the first set of interpreted data along with a report of related recommendations to senior Ministry of Education officials in May 1991. The time framework is to a certain extent prescribed by the support and funding by the Overseas Development Agency, London of an ELT adviser to the Schools Division of the Ministry of Education.

(Details of our project stages are in appendix I).

Areas of Investigation

Within broad guidelines (e.g. the desirability of teacher-led, classroom-based research; the need to monitor the effectiveness of the KBSM curriculum) State Language Officers and their teams were purposely allowed a free hand in deciding their topics for investigation, (in collaboration with teachers), designing their investigative instruments and for drawing up their own administrative schedules. Although there is predictably a degree of overlap in the areas chosen for investigation, there are a range of differences as well as variety of investigative techniques.

The most common topic is some aspect of teachers' classroom management and methodology with particular reference to integration of skills and content, small group activities, pairwork, use of teaching materials and other teaching aids.

Ten out of the fourteen states are investigating one or more aspects of classroom management and methodology. One in-depth study is concentrating on the classroom methodologies of teachers who have little or no ELT training but who have been seconded to teach ELT because of their English language proficiency. This investigation is using questionnaires and interviews, lesson observation, self-evaluation forms and diary studies.

A smaller number of states (four in all) have chosen to direct their investigations towards learning. Specific areas of research are class participation, student interaction, learning styles, story telling and language games, and students' responses to different types of homework assignment. This research is being carried out through the use of questionnaires and interviews (with both teachers and students).

What will prove useful for our national level investigations is that different investigative tools have been chosen by the various states. This means that classroom management and methodology is being investigated using questionnaires and interviews (with both teachers and students); lesson observations, teacher self-assessment forms and teachers end-of-class checklists. As Dermot Murphy has repeatedly stressed the notion of triangulation during each of the seminars held so far, the fact that we will be able to select from a range of data collection techniques for our national level investigations will allow us to scrutinize our data gathering carefully and be more confident in the validity of our results.

(See Appendices II and III for a fuller outline of areas of investigation, and Appendix IV for an outline of projects state by state).

What Have We Learned So Far?

While preparing our paper for this conference we held a two-day meeting with our State Language Officers during which we asked them to give us an up-date of their projects with particular reference to any advice they could now offer, from personal experience, to those contemplating formative evaluation research projects.

This is the advice they offer, more or less unanimously.

Planning	- plan carefully - prepare appropriate instruments - get a third opinion on your instruments - conduct a small pilot study to ensure validity of instruments and whether users can understand it. - try not to do too much!
Topics	- investigate one aspect at a time - identify one area for analysis and investigate this thoroughly (NB triangulation) - start small to begin with.
Questionnaires	- precise, clear, with specific objective - students' questionnaires should be bilingual (Bahasa Malaysia & English)
Personnel	- do not involve too many people initially - get a good team! - get people who are willing to carry out their tasks.
Reporting	- spend time and effort refining your system of reporting (it will save you both time and effort later!).
Public Relations	- try and involve other subjects and other interested parties publicize your efforts.

Participants' responses

At the Ministry we were concerned that the formative evaluation project would stimulate our personnel to initiate research projects. We were particularly anxious that State Language Officers and their teams, and teachers who were involved in the project would not be so pressured by other priorities that they would be unwilling to conduct time-consuming investigations of the type we envisaged.

After the introductory seminar in Melaka in January 1989 we learnt from informal feedback that a number of participants had reservations about the utility of the project or indeed about the Ministry's sincerity in engaging in a dialogue with classroom practitioners. A proportion felt that the project would be short-lived.

On the practical side participants felt unsure and perhaps over-cautions about what to do next. Some felt that they had not been given enough support during the seminar (although this was one aim of the 'discovery' learning approach).

Nevertheless, state level teams suspended their disbelief and organized working committees, produced research tools and began their investigations. Although results so far have been incomplete and inconclusive, some of them are summarized below.

Group Work

i Teachers are concerned that the noise level in their classes during groupwork may 'upset' their Principals.

ii The good students contribute most of the work during groupwork; the weaker students remain silent.

iii There is a tendency during groupwork for students to use Bahasa Malaysia or their mother tongue.

Integration of Skills

i Teachers feel that more attention should first be given to oral skills.

ii Students are reluctant to speak.

iii There is insufficient time in the class to integrate all language skills.

Moral Values

i It is difficult to include moral values in all lessons.

ii Sometimes lessons may become boring because of attempts to incorporate moral values.

What we have learned at the Ministry is:

Rome was not built in a day

In the interests of having a firm base of experienced and trained personnel we are prepared to allow time for projects to be trialled, refined and tried again. We think that this will allow our officers to gain expertise from personal experience.

More haste less speed.

We regard the formative evaluation work as a long term, ongoing part of the administration of our education system. We believe that rushing things at the beginning of the project, and we feel that we are still at the beginning of our work, will only create problems for us at a later date.

We have tried to give an overview of our formative evaluation project which, aiming towards a national level investigation, naturally involves many people from different areas of our education network. Perhaps the most important thing we have learned is that evaluation of educational processes is, like education itself, continuous and long term.

Appendix I: Project Stages

The stages of our project are:

STAGE	CONTENT
phase one Melaka Seminar January 1989	Introduce personnel to the aims and benefits of formative evaluation. Demonstrate types of data collection. Instigate first attempts.
phase two Penang Seminar August 1989	Review first attempts. Introduce a quarterly newsletter. Schools Division to visit each state to monitor work and 'fine tune' instruments.
phase three Genting Seminar July 1990	Review Selection of state level instruments for national level work. of existing instruments. Framework of channels of reporting from school level via state level to ministry level. Prepare administrative network (e.g. job descriptions). Introduce personnel to quantitative procedures, and train personnel in more sophisticated ways of analysis and reporting. Instigate National level investigations.
phase four December 1990	Review of progress and available instruments. Seminar and workshops to introduce formative evaluation work into schools nationally. Schools Division to visit each state to help with data collection
phase five	Interpretation of first set of March 1991 findings by Schools Division. Preparation of report on initial national formative evaluation. Survey and related recommendations for submission to Ministry officials.

Appendix II: Areas of investigation

Focusing on Methodology

teachers' methodology	questionnaires (teachers & students) class observation interviews pro-forms
classroom management	observations questionnaires
managing group activities	questionnaires interviews (students & teachers)
managing pair work	questionnaires interviews
integration of skills & content	questionnaires interviews
use of teaching aids and materials	questionnaires checklists interviews (teachers)
investigation of teaching and learn-learning techniques in the KBSM syllabus	questionnaires
a study of non-optionists (ELT teachers whose main discipline is not English)	observation self-evaluation forms. questionnaires interviews diary studies

Appendix III : Areas of investigation

Focusing on Learning

class participation/student interaction	questionnaires and interviews (students & teachers)
story telling & language games	questionnaires (students)
students' work activities	student questionnaires
the level of class participation	questionnaires and interviews (teachers & students)

Appendix IV: State Formative Evaluation Projects

Formative Evaluation projects are being conducted in each state in Malaysia.

State	Personnel	Number of schools	Area of investigation	Data collection technique(s)
Perlis	2 JPN officers 8 teachers questionnaires	16 secondary schools	teaching techniques	questionnaires (students (teachers) lesson observations
Kedah	2 JPN officers 3 teachers	30 secondary schools	students homework	questionnaires (forms I & II assignments students)
Pulau Pinang	2 JPN officers 1 Key Personnel 1 teacher	20 secondary schools	students' class (10 urban) (10 rural)	questionnaires interviews participation students class interaction
Perak	3 JPN officers 12 Resource Persons 9 Assistant District Education officers	20 secondary schools of teaching	teachers' checklist aids and teaching materials	use questionnaires
Kelantan	3 JPN officers 20 teachers	20 secondary schools	non-optionists using KBSM	lesson observations checklists self-evaluation forms questionnaires in reviews diary studies
Terengganu	1 JPN officer teachers	11 secondary schools	teaching methodologies	questionnaires interviews 10 State and District
Pahang	2 JPN officers 12 Key Personnel	15 secondary schools	teaching methodologies in KBSM learning opportunities in KBSM	questionnaires

State	Personnel	Number of schools	Area of investigation	Data collection technique(s)
Wilayah Persekutuan	3 JPN officers 2 Key Persons Supervisor 3 teachers	15 secondary schools	story telling and language	questionnaires 1 English games
Selangor	2 JPN officers 3 Resource Persons 1 Language Supervisor teachers students	15 secondary schools	pairwork activities	questionnaires interviews
Johor	1 JPN officer 17 Key Persons	142 secondary schools (both rural and urban)	groupwork activities	questionnaires lesson observations
Negeri Sembilan	4 JPN officers 3 Resource	10 secondary schools	classroom management	observations questionnaires
Melaka	4 JPN officers 3 Resource Persons	12 secondary schools	integration of skills & content	questionnaires (students & teachers) interviews small group activities (students and teachers) moral values
Sarawak	2 JPN officers 1 Assistant Principal 4 teachers	12 secondary schools	managing group activities	questionnaires interviews
Sabah	2 JPN officers School Inspectors Zone Heads Principals Resource Persons Teachers	10 secondary schools	teaching methodology	questionnaires interviews proforma